

The “Dollar-a-Minute” Locksmith



**A Simple Step-by-Step Business Plan for Earning
Part-Time or Full-Time Income Re-Keying and
Repairing House Locks**

David Calvin, A-Best Locksmith

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Introduction

I became a locksmith in 1989 in a small town in Tennessee. After seeing a locksmith charge \$85 to extract a broken key from a car ignition and spend only five minutes doing it, I knew that there was

easy money to be made in the locksmith industry. Of course, I did not know where or how I could learn the skills necessary to begin the profession; and I guessed correctly that the locksmith I watched making the \$85 was not about to tell me!

Like many people, I found a famous locksmith course being advertised in a magazine. I sent off for the brochure and enrolled in the course. Although the course at that time covered some important subjects regarding lock cylinder servicing, I can truly say that most of what I learned was useless. Believe it or not, after I finished the course, I set out in search of clients. That was in 1989.

My first job earned me \$35. A friend from church had an old-fashioned mortise lock that needed a key. I removed the lock, took out a skeleton key blank, and filed the key down by hand. I was ecstatic! In one hour I made \$35.

It did not take long for other people to find out I was interested in tinkering with locks. Soon, people were calling me for various kinds of lock jobs. To be sure, there were some jobs I did not accept because of my unfamiliarity with a particular lock; but I always showed up, acted confidently, and tried to do the job. Most of the time, I faked it until I made it. That means I approached each lock job carefully knowing that, if a person put a lock together, a person could take it apart and then put it back together!

By 1994, I was doing so much lock work, still part-time, that I decided to quit my full-time job and be a locksmith full-time. The day I made the transition was July 4, 1994. It was Independence Day. By the end of that week, my “after parts” income was \$1800 for one week’s worth of work.

What makes this whole story so fascinating is that today, April 7, 2011, I am grossing \$141,000 per year and keeping \$80,000. And it gets even better: I am still working less than forty hours per week! In

fact, when I estimate actual time spent working on locks, I am working between 20 and 30 hours.

What A-Best Locksmith Looks Like Today

I get up at 7 o'clock in the morning and leave the house at 8 o'clock. I return at 4 in the afternoon. I serve clients Monday through Friday and do not answer the phone on the weekends. My services are offered to residential and commercial clients and are limited to doors on buildings. I re-key, replace, and repair door locks only. I do not open cars, make ignition keys, drill open safes, install electric locks, install alarms, service soda machines, service safe deposit boxes, or sell and install doors.

Because I choose to live in the country, I drive 80 to 150 miles per day in one of the smallest cars made: A 2008 two-door Ford Focus. At 35 miles per gallon with tools on board, that pretty much takes gas out of the equation. My vehicle is unmarked because clients do not want people knowing that a locksmith is on the premises. It also helps keep your vehicle from being burglarized. I like driving it and parking it. I hate working out of it. However, in today's economy, the money I save in gas is astounding.

The locks I work on include residential locks -- doorknobs or levers and deadbolts. Sometimes customers ask for a peephole. Commercially, I re-key doors, install new locks and panic bars, and repair them. I also replace bad hinges with continuous hinges and install door closers. My high-security key of choice is Mul-T-Lock, and I have them installed from as far south as Winchester, Tennessee, to as far north as Clarksville, Tennessee.

My website is www.a-bestlocksmith.com and includes a "do-it-yourself" section for residential and commercial clients who wish to repair locks themselves. I also provide information on how to avoid scams, how to select a locksmith, and how to bargain with locksmiths. As you can guess, my competitors hate me.

As time goes on, and as I have chosen to live a simple life, I find I do not need to make as much money as I once did. Eventually, I will whittle my work days down to four, three, and then to two days per week.

My clients include Fluor Daniel, General Mills, Arby's (four states), Pinnacle Bank, Titlemax (Middle Tennessee), Discount Tire (Middle Tennessee), and numerous others.

The Purpose of This Book

This book is designed to give the prospective locksmith a good overview of residential locks work. This book is not a lesson book on how to pick open locks or change locks. There are, however, some descriptions of lock servicing which are included in order to illustrate the simplicity of the services a person will perform as a locksmith. This book has been designed primarily as an information source for people who are doing preliminary research into the residential lock business.

At the end of this book, you will find included my Amazon book *The Basics of Lock Cylinder Rekeying*. You will also find a complete Kwikset knob breakdown.

What You Will Get Out of This Book

This book is an invaluable source of information for the person considering locksmith work as a source of part-time or full-time income. It can also help you if you are already a locksmith and are looking for suggestions. Specifically, this book will focus on giving interested individuals solid, practical information about residential locksmith work regarding:

1. Scope of work to be performed
2. Pricing
3. Educational needs
4. Tools required and where to buy them
5. Types of locks to be serviced
6. Advertising
7. Insurance
8. Customer service
9. Vehicle Ideas
10. How to take advantage of the locksmith scams that are out there by positioning your company as the honest company
11. Step-by-step rekeying of residential lock cylinders, with illustrations at the end of the book.

Yes, residential lock servicing is a great way to bring in part-time or full-time revenue. It is not hard to learn, and equipment costs are minimal. Can you imagine becoming the residential home lock expert in your area? Can you become the person on whom everybody relies for advice and repair? Of course you can! Also consider that you will be able to serve customers faster and with better customer service than the large locksmith companies in your area. Why? Because you will be the area expert in home lock servicing.

The key to succeeding in this business concept is to stay focused on residential sector service. I cannot stress this enough. If you start out

with my business plan and in two weeks start to consider other income streams from other types of lock servicing, you will be overwhelmed. Yes, there may come a time a year or two down the road when you will want to begin serving the commercial sector; but by focusing on residential, your jump to commercial will be much easier and less confusing. Stay focused! Become the best residential guy in your area! When people ask you what you do as a locksmith, you will say, "I specialize in residential lock service exclusively."

So, what exactly is this book about? This book is a detailed overview of what you can expect to learn, do, and purchase in order to become a reputable residential locksmith. I will also discuss some problems you will encounter in the field so you can at least be ready to meet them. Of course, you will have to learn how to pin up lock cylinders to new keys. That, by the way, is the easiest part of the whole business!

If you wish to purchase locksmith tools (regulated tools not included, but everything you need to rekey locks), you can visit www.deadboltsfordollars.com where I can sell you the basic tools needed on a package price. (The packages will be ready for sale by the first of December, 2013. Individual pieces can be bought at that website immediately. However, if you need a package kit immediately, or if you have one you would like to have, please email me at [abestlocksmith \(at\) gmail \(dot\) com](mailto:abestlocksmith@gmail.com) or call me at 615-308-6794. My goal in selling these packages is to sell them at my cost plus a little markup. Hopefully, I can get these to you cheaper than anybody can.

Scope of Work to be Performed

Residential lock work is very easy work to perform. The easiest task will be squirting WD-40 into a weather-beaten Kwikset lock so the key will enter and turn. The most difficult job, which is still not very difficult, will be installing a deadbolt. Here is what a customer will ask you to do, beginning with the most common request.

1. Re-key the house locks.

A. Types of Locks.

On beginner homes up to homes that are of average quality, you will find Kwikset, EZ Set, Yale, Defiant, and Callin. All of these brands are made to accept the Kwikset key. I suspect that there are others that take this common keyway as well. There will be other brand names including Schlage. However, most of these homes will have locks that are on the Kwikset keyway. Most companies make copies of Kwikset because it is a widely recognized brand. A Kwikset style key blank (KW1) will fit most home locks. Schlage, however, will have its own unique keyway (SC1). You may also encounter Weiser locks. So, in order to rekey most homes, you will carry three types of key blanks. KW1, SC1, and Weiser. These are available through your locksmith supply company and cost you about 30 cents each, purchased in lots of fifty. You can ask for \$1.50 to \$2.50 per key copy.

When rekeying homes, you may encounter Kwikset's new lock which is designed to be re-keyable by the homeowner. Generally, homeowners will not attempt to re-key these. They will still call you for that service. Servicing these locks is as easy as 1) inserting old key and turning key a quarter turn to the right, 2) inserting change tool, 3) removing change tool, 4) removing old key, 5) inserting new key 6) returning key to

upright position. A three-door home can be keyed in less than 10 minutes. Schlage also has a similar lock available.

More expensive homes may have fancier locks. Sometimes you will find Baldwin locks on homes. These, however, usually accept Schlage keys. Baldwin also has been using Kwikset style keys.

Also note that locks come in three different grades. Grade 3 is the standard residential lock grade. It is generally made for light traffic. You can also find grade 2 locks at Lowe's or Home Depot. These cost more but are rated for medium duty and are able to withstand more traffic. I would recommend using a grade 2 lock on the most-used door of a home. Make the sale to your customer! The most-used door, and the one that always goes bad first, is the garage door that leads into the kitchen. Grade 1 is heavy commercial. Price-wise, you can expect this: Grade 3 will cost you from \$3.00 to \$18.00 per lock. Grade 2 may cost you \$20.00 to \$40.00 per lock. Grade 1 knobs or levers will cost you from \$115 to \$400.

B. Lock removal methods.

Standard Kwikset and Weiser locks are removed by unscrewing two screws on each lock. To remove a knob, first remove the screws, then push in the latch. The knob will then come out of the door. Some Kwikset levers are removed by putting a small flat-head screwdriver in the slot of the stem on the outside. By turning the inside thumb turn slowly, the screwdriver will push the catch in and the outside lever handle will slip off. Other brands incorporate one of these same methods. Kwikset's homeowner re-keyable lock is keyed while remaining on the door.

C. Re-key method.

- 1) remove lock from door;

- 2) remove round clip from rear of lock with small flat-head screwdriver;
 - 3) insert key into lock and turn quarter turn;
 - 4) use follower tool in rear of lock and push cylinder out into your hand;
 - 5) using tumbler guide printed on pinning kit specific to the brand you are using, insert correct size pins;
 - 6) reverse steps 4 through 1.
- This takes about 60 seconds per cylinder.

D. Variations.

In order to rekey some locks, you must have a key that works. In the event the customer does not have a key for the locks, you have a few options. If the product is a non-bump-resistant Kwikset, I would remove the locks and trash them. If they are regular cheapy Kwikset, you remove the lock, remove the cylinder, and shim it open. If the locks are Schlage, you can remove the dead bolt and shim it open, and re-key it. If it is a Schlage knob, you have to pick the cylinder to the unlocked position, then use a paper clip to remove the core. Picking these residential grade locks is generally easy, although there are some that refuse to pick open. There is also a new residential Schlage lock system available at your hardware store. This lock is re-keyable by the home owner. In the event you are called to key one of these locks, you must have two “blue” Schlage change keys. These are uncut and available at Lowe’s. In order to re-key this lock, you must cut the customer’s old key onto one of the “blue” blanks, and then cut the new key onto the other “blue” blank. To re-key the lock, insert the first cut “blue” key into the lock and turn to 11 o’clock. Remove it in that position. Insert the new “blue” key, turn it back to the removal position, 12 o’clock, and remove it. The lock will be re-keyed to the new key. This is simple. In the event that the homeowner does not have a working key for this lock, you will have to replace the lock. (As of 6-29-2011.)

E. Average re-key time.

A home with three doors with two locks on each door (deadbolt and doorknob) should take less than one hour. A proficient locksmith should be able to rekey this house in 30 minutes or less, depending on whether or not there are latches to be replaced, strikes to be realigned, etc.

F. Charges.

To re-key a home with three doors, you will spend a few dollars for tumblers and key blanks. The costs for your parts will be negligible. On the cheaper side, I charge a \$50 service call and \$15 per lock cylinder. At two cylinders per door, that comes to \$30 per door, times 3 equals \$90. Add the \$50 service call and the job is \$140. Not bad for 30 minutes' work!

2. Unlock the door.

A. Picking.

After a little practice picking locks on your home and your consenting neighbor's home, you will be opening Kwikset and Schlage locks in as little as 45 seconds. However, some locks can take twenty minutes. If you cannot pick the lock, you will drill it open. The Kwikset bump-resistant lock (the one that the customer can re-key himself) is pick resistant. It must be drilled. Do not waste your time picking. Drill and replace. Time is of the essence in most situations.

B. Charges.

Depending on where the house is and what time of day you go the house, you can charge whatever the customer agrees to pay. I like to get \$75 during the day -- a \$50 service call and \$25 for the labor.

3. The door strikes need to be realigned.

A. Deadbolt and doorknob latches.

Often -- and be sure to check this every time you rekey a house -- there is door sag. Over time, the foundation of the home moves. When this happens, the knob and/or deadbolt will not lock into place when the door is closed. First, you will stand where you can see the latches as they try to enter their respective strike plates. If they hit off center, lower or raise the strike plates until the problem is solved. Sometimes, the hole in the wooden jamb where the deadbolt enters is drilled only one half inch deep. If this is the case, the deadbolt is not truly being engaged. You must take a one inch spade bit and drill this hole at least one inch deep. If the latches are only missing the strike plates by a small amount, a good round metal file will do the trick. Replace the strike plate screws with longer sheetrock screws for added security.

B. Loose hinges.

Sometimes, when the door latches are not catching properly, you can simply install a couple of long sheetrock screws in the top hinge of the door. This will pull the door up and often realign the latches and strikes.

C. Charges.

This job costs you only the vehicle costs it took for you to make the service call. I would charge \$75 for the first door and \$25 for each additional. But this job could be charged higher.

4. Install a deadbolt.

A. Preliminaries.

My fastest deadbolt installation is four minutes. Usually, I take about fifteen minutes to do a deadbolt. When a customer calls you about a deadbolt installation where there is no deadbolt installed, you will be starting from scratch. You will first ask

the customer the color of the door knob. You will then ask for the brand name stamped on the latch of the doorknob. This way, you can simply go to Lowe's and get the correct deadbolt. Or, you can drive to the customer's home and look for yourself. Generally, the colors will be bright brass, antique brass, or brushed nickel. A deadbolt will have either a key on one side or a key on both sides. Once you have chosen your deadbolt, you will likely take the customer's key and re-key the deadbolt to that key.

B. Installation.

- 1) Take your alignment gauge and mark the spot on the face of the door and on the edge of the door where the deadbolt will be installed. (Tools to be described later.) Always use this gauge on the outside of the door in case the door is beveled.
- 2) Then, take a 2 1/8 inch hole saw and drill the face of the door until the pilot bit comes out on the other side. Finish drilling the door from the inside. By doing this, you will keep from punching through to the other side and tearing paint, fraying metal, or splintering wood.
- 3) Take a one-inch spade bit and drill on the side of the door until the bit comes through inside the first large hole you drilled previously.
- 4) Take the strike locator, insert it into the side hole, close the door, and mark the strike hole onto the jamb.
- 5) Using the one- inch spade bit, drill that hole one inch deep.
- 6) Take the mortising tool and mark the side of the door where the one-inch spade bit went in.
- 7) Take your one-inch flat wood chisel and outline the marks made by the mortise tool and then scoop out the wood to the thickness of the faceplate of the dead bolt latch/bolt.
- 8) Install the latch/bolt and install the deadbolt.
- 9) Close door, observe that the bolt goes into the jamb hole.
- 10) If there is enough room between the door and the jamb, surface-mount the strike plate. If not, hold plate up in position,

draw a line around it, and chisel it out so the plate sits down inside the wood jamb.

C. Charges.

You will charge your service call, your cost on the deadbolts, a re-keying charge if you wish, and labor for the installation. So, I would charge \$50 for the service call, \$15 each (your cost) for the deadbolts, \$50 - \$60 labor for each deadbolt installed, and usually not charge to match the deadbolts to the customer's key. If you wish to charge for this, add \$5 to \$15 additional for each deadbolt installed. So, two deadbolts installed should bring you about \$150 net.

5. The Kwikset lock is jammed and the door is closed.

This happens sometimes with Kwikset. You will remove the lock from the door, after releasing the spindle, then use a screwdriver and vise grips and destroy the latch. Sometimes, you can gently pry the lock latch away from the jamb. Replace the latch. \$100 job. This problem occurs on all brands. On knob latches, sometimes when the door is shut, the door bounces off of the jamb without catching. Oil the latch first; if that works, you are finished. Another way to tell if the latch is truly defective is to open the door and push in on the latch with your hand. If it doesn't go in, then it is defective. On defective latches, you will notice that the deadlatch protrusion on the main latch body is jammed up into the latch. Just look at your own home door and you will see two parts of the latch. The smaller part is the piece that makes the latch lock into position, making it more difficult to "credit-card" the lock open.

6. The deadbolt bolt is jammed.

This happens sometimes. Remove the deadbolt, shoot oil on the bolt, and try to turn it with a flat head screw driver. If not successful, destroy it and replace. \$85 job.

7. Kwikset knob unlocks itself when the knob is locked.

This happens because the return spring in the knob is broken, which often occurs on older locks. Lock the door. Turn the outside knob back and forth a few times and the lock will unlock. Replace. \$85 job.

8. Key will not enter lock. There appears to be a broken key in the lock.

Usually, there is no broken key in the lock. The customer is seeing the pins. Believe it or not, WD-40 solves this. Locks corrode in the rain and sun. Flush the locks. \$65-\$85 job.

9. Deadbolt is hard to turn.

This could be a strike out of alignment or poor carpentry. Sometimes, carpenters do not line the 2 1/8 bore with the one-inch cross bore and this puts undo stress on the bolt. If this is happening with a Kwikset deadbolt, replace it with a Lowe's generic deadbolt that has no lip that goes into the 2 1/8 bore. This will enable you to set the new deadbolt in the hole in an off-centered fashion, thus relieving pressure. Or you could use a Kwikset jig and re-cut the door and place a beauty ring around the deadbolt. These rings that correct poor bores are available at all hardware stores. \$95-\$125 job.

10. The keys have to be jiggled to work.

The customer has poor key copies. You will need to re-key the locks to a new key, making sure the customer gets the original factory copies. Keys stop working when customers get copies of copies of copies. Nothing in this world can be copied perfectly. There is always a variation in a copy. If you look at your keys, the cuts in the key should be straight down, flat, and straight up. Re-key service call prices apply here.

11. The key in the deadbolt spins around and the lock does not lock or open.

Remove the deadbolt and look to see if the tailpiece is still attached. Reattach if loose or replace lock. Sometimes the bolt or latch is broken. Kwikset deadbolts are prone to having the rear clips coming off. \$75 and up.

12. Callin lock issues.

Callin makes a nice-looking residential lock, but they do not hold up for very long. On knobs, the latches break and jam the doors shut. Their levers also have serious problems. After using the key so many times, the cylinder cogs rub down to nothing and, when the key is turned, the outside cylinder just turns. Replace these locks or replace the relevant parts.

13. I need my locks replaced.

Because there are so many different types of locks on the market, not to mention different colors and finishes, there is no way you will be able to go out, choose a lock style, install it, and have the customer be completely satisfied. However, if you can find out which color the customer prefers, and whether the locks are deadbolts, doorknob, or levers, then you can just ask the customer if he or she would like for you to go and get them. Or, you can suggest to the customer that, because of the variety of locks that are available, he or she go out and select the locks. After they are purchased, you, the locksmith, can make the service call, make sure the locks are all keyed alike, and install them. You will also add that you will make sure all of the strikes are aligned and that all of the door hinges are properly tightened. \$50 service call and \$30 per door.

14. Key is broken off in lock.

If you can get into the house, simply remove the deadbolt, remove the plug, and push the key through the rear of the lock plug. Sometimes you can push it through the front. Or use a spiral-type broken key extractor (\$2.00 item) and fish the broken key out of the lock. Remember, the key can only come out of a lock if the key is turned to the position where it is inserted and removed. This position on a correctly-installed lock is where the key cuts are faced upward at 12 o'clock. If the lock was put in upside down, then the removal direction will be at 6 o'clock. Always install a lock with the keyway facing upwards.

15. Keys are locked in car.

Okay, I know we said that we were going to focus on residential lock service. However, do consider getting a good car opening kit. Call one of the listed distributors (found in this document) and ask for the prices of the various kits. Or go online and find Z-Tool. This kit seems to be the simplest and most compact, not to mention the cheapest. Pro-Lock is a good one as well. There will be times when

people lock their keys in the vehicle. During reasonable daytime hours, you should get at least \$65 for the service. After hours, when most locksmiths do not even answer the phone, you could get over \$100, depending on the type of vehicle and location. Be sure you have the “Hold Harmless” forms (sold by your tool kit dealer) signed before you do the job.

Pricing

One of the greatest myths in the service industry is that the lowest bid gets the job. While it is true that some institutions and businesses take the lowest bid for their lock projects, it is also true that you should think twice before you decide to be the “low-priced-guy” in town. First of all, the low bid is often thrown out along with the high bid. The reasons are obvious: customers know they get what they pay for, and they have been burned by the low-bid service providers. Second, when you purposely bid the lowest, you are telling your customers that you are inexperienced, do shoddy work, and sell cheap products. While this is a general statement that does not hold true for every situation, it does have some truth to it. Suppose, for example, that it is Monday morning and you have scheduled a house re-key for \$25. I do not know about you, but I do not get out of bed for \$25. Many service companies that bid low do not have great incentive to get the job done. You have seen this happen before. You hire a company to do a job at your home and the service techs show up sporadically over a period of five months.

Take one locksmith in my area as an example. Because business is good in my area, and this particular locksmith was getting quite a few calls, he would quote and take every call that came in. As the day wore on, he would “cherry pick” the nicer, high-paying jobs and then just not show up for the smaller ones. He would overbook himself just so he could “cherry pick” the good-paying jobs. He would not complete the lower-priced jobs. Bid your jobs so that your time and effort are properly rewarded.

One of my commercial clients, a client that most locksmiths would kill to have, will not buy a lock from me if it is under a certain price. They require the most expensive, high-quality locks that money can buy. It is that simple. In fact, I have lost jobs that I priced low. Even if I price a job where I am making good money, if the price does not

reflect quality, the client will assume I am a service provider who is of low quality.

Here are some pricing strategies you should think about:

1. Call a few locksmiths and ask the amount of their service call charge.

Some people would tell you that knowing this amount should not matter. Instead, they say that you should charge what you need in order to survive. Yes, this is a valid statement. However, it is good to have a general idea of what local service call charges are. If you decide to start your own residential lock service, you might begin by taking an average of three or four charges and sticking to that. Do not be the low guy! Depending on a number of circumstances, you will arrive at a service call rate and you will stick to it. A service call gets you to the customer. After the service call, you price each service you provide. Do know that, as you become known as the most responsible, friendly, knowledgeable locksmith, you will command a higher service call rate. However, if you drive a two-door Ford Focus like I do, then you can quote your customer a low service call rate and say, "I get 35 miles to the gallon!"

2. Price each service.

Decide on a per-cylinder rate. For example, when a customer calls me, I quote a \$50 service call and \$15 for each lock that I rekey. I tell them that I will charge \$15 everywhere a key can be inserted. If a house has four doors, it probably has two locks per door for a total of eight locks. So, that would be \$30 per door. The total job would be \$170. Now, here is a neat trick that I use to land the job. Because this job takes me less than 30 minutes to complete, I say, "Well, you know, that sounds like a lot of money, but that is the going rate here in this area. But, since I am pretty quick, let's just knock off \$30. How does that sound?" Understand that \$140 for that short job is very nice income. Many people do not make \$140 in two days! Decide also what you will charge for a minimum call. Generally, I do

not do anything for under \$65. You will need to come up with a price for the following things: 1) Strike alignment, 2) Deadbolt installations, 3) Hinge tightening, 4) Knob replacement, 5) Latch replacement, and a host of other things. The problem for you as a beginner will be that you will not know how long certain jobs will take. Sometimes you will under-bid a job. After 23 years, I still do that!

3. Pricing strategy.

We have already begun to discuss this in the previous point. But let us continue. Be sure you are familiar with prices in your area. Why? Because you will be able to use my best line! (Which, by the way, is honest and helpful to the customer.) Look at this scenario: Your phone rings. You answer. "This is David, A-Best Locksmith. How may I help you?" Customer: "How much would you charge to re-key my home?" At this point, you quote your service call and per cylinder charge. Some people will just freak out. Some will not. If you hear some hesitancy on the part of the customer, tactfully and quickly say, "Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. If the job goes fast, then I will give you a dollar off of each cylinder. That would make it \$14 per cylinder. If you would like to check prices with other locksmiths, you'll find that \$15 is the normal charge. I will also check that the doors latch properly and make any necessary adjustments." As time goes on, you will discover other pricing strategies that work well for you. The best strategy, though, will be based on honesty and truth. Trust me.

4. Pricing to Friends and relatives.

Be sure to use good judgment when bidding lock jobs to friends and relatives. Of course, if you have a friend or relative who has helped you out before at no charge, it is only reasonable to return the favor. But be aware that you will have friends and relatives who will expect you to work for very little or nothing. A person I once knew asked me this question: "If you cannot charge your friends, who can you charge?" He had a great point. None of your customers are going to become your enemies, hopefully. You want them as friends who can rely on your judgment and refer you to others. When you have friends and relatives who are coming to you and asking you to work for free, they are insulting you. It is that simple. You are being taken advantage of, and you are being insulted. These people are probably free-loaders who will not work for anything themselves, so they expect you to do the same. A good way to handle all requests from

friends and family is to say, “Sure, I will be glad to handle these lock issues for you. And I don’t mean for this to sound hard, but I have a key machine, a bunch of tools, an insurance policy, a car, and a cell phone. Could I quote you a \$50 service call and \$15 per lock? This business of mine helps me make ends meet at a time when ends aren’t meeting.” Once you have approached the money issue this way, most people will readily agree with you. Actually, they may never have thought of the fact that you paid for a cell phone, a key machine, and a bunch of tools! On the other hand, be aware that there are some people who will absolutely hate you for the rest of your life because you dared to ask for some reimbursement.

Educational Needs

Your education will be of primary importance. First, you will have to learn how to “pin up” a cylinder. I can teach you this in about ten minutes as it is very simple. You will need to learn how to do the following:

- 1) take locks off doors
- 2) remove the cores
- 3) key the locks to a new key
- 4) re-key house locks when a customer hands you a key that works the back door and asks you to make the front door the same
- 5) pick locks open
- 6) drill locks open
- 7) shim locks open that have been taken apart but are missing the operating key
- 8) cut keys on a key machine.

These are the basics and, for your purposes as a residential locksmith, just about all you will need to know. For your purposes as a residential locksmith, there is no need to go into safes, automobiles, burglar alarms, or closed circuit television. Your goal is to make easy money with the lowest overhead possible. Later, if you choose to become the largest lock service provider in your state, you can do so by taking training in these other fields.

You can learn how to rekey locks a number of ways. First, you can find a locksmith who will teach you. I will tell you right now that most locksmiths will not give you the time of day. If you know a locksmith personally, approach him and ask him to teach you residential lock work only. In return, if he sends you a job that he cannot get to, you will give him a 25% referral fee.

Second, you can go online and search through the online or home study locksmith courses. I have listed two below that are worth

checking into.

1. Locksmith School, Inc., has a home study program that covers the basics I mentioned above. This course will include the Kwikset pinning kit as well as the Schlage pinning kit. You can find them online at <http://www.locksmithschool.net/store.html>.

2. Another school is Locksmith Video School.Com. They have a very thorough course for a reasonable price, but I suspect that you will not use most of what they offer. However, instead of taking the entire course, you can order the lock re-keying DVD, the lock picking DVD, and I believe they have a deadbolt installation DVD, though I would choose not to use the deadbolt jig. You can view their offerings at <http://www.locksmithvideoschool.com/Buy-Full-Courses Online.html>.

Third, I will offer this word of warning: Do not be caught up by tool offerings. We will discuss this later. Many of these schools will include sets of files, one lock pick, and many other useless items. You do not want to learn wafer locks at this time (desk locks), key impressioning (where you insert a blank key into a lock, wiggle it, and file the tumbler dents in order to arrive at a working key), safe deposit box locks, auto key making, electric strikes, or safe servicing. You want to learn to disassemble a house lock, pick it open, shim it, install it, replace it and/or re-key it. This is where the quick, honest, no-frills money is. Focus on this sector of the locksmith industry first. Later, if you want to expand, then learn the commercial side of this business. But it is on residential locks that you will become proficient. Once you have learned and practiced this work, commercial lock servicing will fall into place very easily.

By the way! Just how easy is it to re-key a lock to a new key?

- 1) Remove the plug
- 2) dump out the old lock pins

- 3) insert the new key
- 4) go to the brand name pin chart shown on the lid of your pin kit
- 5) see the pin sizes which range in size from 1 for the shortest up to 9 which is the longest
- 6) match the pin with the hole until the pin looks flush in the pin chamber with the outside of the plug.

Also, Schlage keys have the pin sizes listed on the factory original keys! It is that simple. If you see the numbers on a Schlage key, 398767, you select each pin in its turn and simply drop into the empty hole! On Kwikset, I just guess, as there are only 7 sizes.

Tools Required

1. For the basic removal of locks from doors, you will need a #2 screwdriver, a pan head screwdriver, and a probe or -- get this -- a paper clip. The probe is for knobs and levers that are not removed for servicing by screwdriver and for locks whose cylinders are released by a hole or slot from the front.



Figure 1 - Drivers



Figure 2 - Multi-Tool

2. For re-keying locks you will need the following:

- 1) a Kwikset cylinder removal tool
- 2) a small flat head screwdriver
- 3) a follower set
- 4) a pin kit
- 5) pick set
- 6) shims
- 7) Tru Arc ring pliers.

The shims are smaller than the picture suggests. (Small flat-head screwdriver is available at any hardware store. This is used to remove

the clips on the back of cylinders.)



Figure 3 - Kwikset Cylinder Removal Tool



Figure 4 - Hollow Brass Follower Kit



Figure 5 - Pin Kit



Figure 6 - Pick Set



Figure 7 - Shims



Figure 8 - Tru Arc Pliers (Reversible)

Remember that the pick set is only necessary if you have to gain entry into the home or if you need to remove the key plug from the cylinder when the operating key is missing. In this case, you take a small shim, insert into the back of the lock, insert the pick from the front and lift up the pins starting at the back so that the shim separates the top pins from the bottom pins, thus allowing the plug to be pushed out of the cylinder by the follower.

The plug is where the replacement pins are inserted. There are master pins and top pins and springs in the top chamber of the lock that your follower keeps in place as you re-key the lock. In the event you are re-keying a house lock that has master pins in it, you will have to remove them. This will be covered in your locksmith course. You will know that you have left the master pins in when you re-key the lock, re-insert the plug, and the new key will not come out. This happens because the master pins, when combined with a taller bottom pin, create a pin stack that is too tall to move upward to allow the key to be removed.

As you can see, you really do not need to have very many tools for residential lock rekeying.

3. Next, you should consider a key machine, though you can get by without it if you buy a bunch of pre-cut keys from your locksmith. You can ask him for two factory originals and ten copies each. But this will cost you money over the long run. In order to generate more money with your machine, you could drop your card off at local churches and offer to cut keys for a per-key fee without a service call.

I would recommend one of the following two machines: The first is the Rytan machine. This is the one I use. You can order it to run on 12 volts DC so you can run wires from your car battery to your trunk. The second one is the Ilco Mini Mite. It is also available in 12 volts

DC. You will notice that these machines are quite small. The Rytan is larger but is wider than it is deep. It cuts with a carbide blade, and mine has not dulled in 12 years. The Mini Mite is the smaller of the two; but it uses a file cutter which will dull over time. It also cuts more slowly. Frankly, I do not like it. However, it is probably the cheaper of the two.



Figure 9 - Rytan Key Machine



Figure 10 - Ilco Mini Mite

4. Now, let's look at deadbolt installation equipment. You will need a good, 18-volt cordless drill. I use Bosch. This drill has lasted two to three times as long as any Dewalt I have ever owned. You will also need the following:

- 1) 2 1/8 inch metal/wood cutting hole saw
- 2) one-inch hole saw
- 3) one-inch spade bit
- 4) one-inch flat wood chisel – not shown

- 5) measuring gauge for marking drill points at face and edge of door – not shown
- 6) strike locator
- 7) Kwikset lock jig
- 8) mortising tool
- 9) screw driver bits for your cordless drill – not shown
- 10) a hammer – not shown.



Figure 11 - Hole Saw 2 1/8 Bore



Figure 12 - Hole Saw 1 Inch Bore



Figure 13 - Spade Bits



Figure 14 - Kwikset Stike Alignment Tool



Figure 15 - Kwikset Jig



Figure 16 - Kwikset Mortice Tool

5. Deadbolt Installation procedure. How involved is a deadbolt installation? My fastest installation was four minutes. I once installed six in one hour. First, using the marking template, mark the 2 1/8 spot on the face of the door on the outside. Always mark and drill from the outside unless you know the door is not beveled. With the same template, mark the edge of the door for the one-inch spade bit. Drill the 2 1/8 hole from both sides once the pilot has penetrated through the door. Drill for the bolt with the one-inch spade bit. Next, take the strike locator and insert it into the one-inch spade bit hole. You will notice the black locator with the pin tip extruding. Once you close the door, you reach into the 2 1/8 hole and push this locator in against and into the jamb, thus making a hole or mark. Next, open the door and drill with a one-inch spade bit. Make the hole one inch deep or so. Next, take your mortising tool, center it in the one-inch hole on the edge of the door. Hit it with a hammer and you will imprint the shape of the deadbolt bolt faceplate. Take your one-inch wood chisel (available at any hardware store) and outline the markings a little deeper by tapping the chisel into the markings with your hammer. Then, laying the chisel's beveled edge flat against the area you outlined, gently hammer the chisel and flake out the wood. What you are doing is removing all the wood at that point so the faceplate of the deadbolt bolt will lay flush with the side of the door. When this is done, insert the bolt and screw it in. Then, install the deadbolt itself. Now, close the door and visually watch where the bolt goes into the one-inch hole you drilled in the jamb. Finally, if there is room between the door and the jamb, surface mount the strike plate.

If the door and jamb are tight, take the strike plate, lay it against the jamb, and outline it with a pen. Take your one-inch wood chisel and chisel out the wood on the jamb so that the strike lies flat. Check the deadbolt operation.

Remember, you can also use the Kwikset jig to install any deadbolt. But I do not use it for installing deadbolts. I use it for doors where the older doorknob and deadbolt holes are too small for modern 2 1/8 inch fitted locks. Sometimes, you will be called by a customer who will tell you that the locks they purchased for their home are too big for the holes. The jig enables you to easily enlarge holes to modern specification. However, you must remember that the jig may scratch or mar the paint or finish of the wood. Just tell the customer why you need to use the jig and tell them about any possible consequences.

In the event you need a larger mortising tool for the jamb side of the installation, you can go online and find a larger version. But when you are marking the bolt location on the door, the correct mortising tool is the smaller one. (To be included in tool list later.) If in doubt about correct size, and this is really not going to be an issue, just hold the bolt face up against the mortising tool and you will know that the tool is the correct size.

So, how are you going to practice this installation? Marking the drill points is simple with the drill point locator tool, and drilling the bores is easy. The hardest part, which actually is very easy but you are probably worried about doing, is the mortising out of the wood so that the latch fits flush with the edge of the door. Here is what you do: Take out a lock on your house door and look at the edge of the door where the latch came out. See how the space into which the face of the latch or bolt is cut out. You will have to learn that. Get a piece of 2 x 4 lumber and put it in a vise or attach it to a wooden post. Just secure it to something that will keep it still. Take your mortising tool and mark the rectangle place that you will chisel out. Using the sloped end of the one-inch wood chisel flat against the area to be

removed, tap with a hammer and you will see wood curling away. As you proceed, be sure to use the chisel to outline the rectangle so that you do not chip away any wood except what is in the rectangle. Be assured, however, that due to the cuts of wood on some door jambs, and because of knots or grain direction, you will sometimes (rarely) have a small piece of wood outside the rectangle area chip. After you practice chiseling for about an hour, you are ready.

Specific Locksmith Tool List

1. HPC Hollow Brass Follower Set
2. Selection of Phillips and Flat Head Screw Drivers
3. Kwikset Cylinder Removal Tool (2)
4. Tru Arc Ring Pliers
5. Set of Allen Wrenches (Metric and Standard)
6. Lock Shims
7. Lab .003 Increment Pin Kit
8. HPC Probe
9. 12 Volt DC Key Machine (Compact)
10. Selection of Key Blanks
11. Set of Pliers (Vise Grips, Needle Nose, Channel
Lock)
12. Metal Files (Half Round, Round, Flat)
13. Wooden Golf Tees (to fill in stripped holes)
14. Set of Practice Locks
15. HPC Easy Backset Marker (for marking deadbolt
drill points)
16. Kwikset Locks Installation Jig (optional, but nice
to have for re-boring)
17. One-Inch spade bit
18. 2 1/8 Metal Hole Saw w/ Pilot Bit
19. One-Inch Metal Hole Saw
20. One-Inch Wood Chisel
21. Standard Mortising Tool for Latches (which
often doubles as strike tool)
22. Strike Locator
23. Set of Extras Latches and Bolts for Various
Brands (optional)
24. Box of Mix and Match Screws for Jamb Strike
Plates
25. Basic Pick Set (Rakes and Tension Tools)
26. Plug Spinner (when you can only pick a lock in

the wrong direction)

27. Set of Broken Key Extractors
28. Car Opening Kit (for additional easy money making)
29. 18 Volt Cordless Drill
30. HPC Pin Tweezers
31. Selection of Key Blanks
32. Pre-cut, Factory Original Keys (See your local locksmith)
33. 3-Part Pre-Printed Invoices from NEBS
34. A-1 Key Punch That Cuts Kwikset and Schlage Keys by Code OR
35. Framon Code Machine

Lock Distributors

If you do not want to mess with opening an account with a locksmith supply house, especially in the beginning, go to www.deadboltsfordollars.com and look at the tools and tool packages that I sell. If you buy your tools as a package, you can save money. Of course, I do add a markup.

There are a number of great distributors from whom you can buy locks and equipment. Personally, I use three. The reason for this is that not all distributors will always have what you are looking for. One of the best bargains in the industry is McDonald Dash Locksmith Supply in Memphis, TN. I would suggest calling them first for your equipment needs. Their number is 1-800-238-7541. Another great distributor is IDN Armstrong's, and they have shipping points all over the US. They have a great line of grade 3 residential locks that are very affordable. Their number is 1-800-726-3332. Of course, you may be reading this book twenty years from now! Just do a web search, in that case. I am sure these distributors will always be there.

A word about US Lock Corporation. As of 2013, I have decided that this company has treated me unfairly in that, because I failed to spend \$15,000 per year with them, they banned me from buying a specific type of lock product. Also, their US Lock line of levers, knobs, and deadbolts are not anything special. In fact, their prices on even the basic mortise cylinders has gotten to be too high. They are now my last choice for lock purchases, though I still do buy some things from them.

Types, Brands, and Functions of Locks to Be Serviced

1. Kwikset.

This is one of the most common locks you will see. This keyway is called the KW1 and is copied by almost every major manufacturer. Callin, Yale, Defiant, and a host of other companies make locks that you can buy that you can use on homes that have other Kwikset locks. They can all be keyed to the same key using the same size pins. Of course, there are times when I have had to use pins that were three thousandths of an inch shorter; but, generally, you should not have a problem here. Kwikset makes levers, knobs and deadbolts. Most can be serviced easily even if the keys are missing. In the event you come across the bump-resistant locks that have no key, there is a cradle made by Kwikset that can help you re-key these. Generally, I just throw them away and replace. I do not believe it is worth the time and money to reset these bump-resistant locks.

2. Dexter.

This lock takes its own key, DE1. Sometimes a Kwikset key will work, but other times it will not. Dexter has long been out of business. Schlage has recently begun making the Dexter lock, but this is a new Dexter. If you come across the old Dexter locks and they are all in great shape and have a working key, then re-key them. To re-key these, you take the lock off the door, pull out the spring-loaded tail, turn the key 180 degrees, and pull the cylinder out. You then remove a clip and a Tru Arc ring and re-key. You probably will never see these.

3. Schlage.

This company makes a number of nice products. However, the residential Schlage locks are designed poorly. The knobs are designed to be removed with a key. Insert the key, turn 45 degrees either way, depress the catch visible on the outside stem, and pull. Reassemble

the same way, only in reverse. The problem with the Schlage residential lock is that the caps on top of the cylinders are attached very loosely. They literally float above the cylinder under spring pressure with only very little metal holding them down. I have seen them come out of the packages broken. Should you still install them? Yes. Just let the customer know about the design flaw and do not guarantee them for any reason. Over time, the caps will just come flying off and the customer will be locked out of the house. Not all of the Schlage products have this type of cylinder construction. Also, you can buy parts for these to have on hand. Also, the latches do not last. Keep a few in stock.

4. Weiser.

This lock will take the Kwikset key but it is a good idea to have the Weiser keys on hand. To re-key, you remove the entire knob, pull out on the spring-loaded tail piece, and turn the key slowly to the right while pulling and the cylinder will pop out. You will then use Tru Arc pliers to remove the ring and then rekey.

5. Baldwin.

This is the lock bought by the wealthy. They now make it in Schlage- or Kwikset-compatible formats. This way, you can use it on the front of the house while the sides and rear doors have less expensive locks. Usually, these knobs or levers are removed by inserting a working key, turning the key 45 degrees, and using a probe to release the catch on the outside stem of the lock. Some front doors have a mortise cylinder. Look at the edge of the door and you will see a screw that is about even with the center of the mortise cylinder lock. It will be at either 3 or 9 o'clock. Loosen the screw 3 turns or so, and then, using the old key, insert it half way into the lock and gently turn counterclockwise. The mortise cylinder is a threaded cylinder that will simply unscrew out of the lock. Remove the cam on the rear with a Phillips screwdriver and re-key. Baldwin, however, is really made for looks, and a lot of money is put into those looks. The latches seem to be somebody else's products (usually Schlage residential-quality

parts).

6. Functions of Locks.

On outside doors, keyed entry locks are used. These have a button on the inside that you push in or turn to lock. Check out what you have on your home. Bathrooms use the privacy lock. Hall way and closet doors use passage locks. Other types you will see in commercial settings are storeroom function, which always stay locked but are opened by key and return to locking position when the key is removed, and classroom function, which are locked or unlocked from the outside by key.

Of course, you will come across many other brands of residential locks. But if you can service the above locks, I do not think you will have any problem servicing anything you come across. Just exude confidence when you arrive at the customer's home. You will figure it out.

As part of your exploratory, I would recommend going to your big box hardware store and buying a few different types of locks. Pick up some cheap entry knobs and levers and practice taking them apart. If you need a Kwikset plug removal tool (\$2.00 at your better Ace hardware store), get one. Ask the sales person to show you how it is used. Lowe's and Home Depot offer in-house re-keying, and I am sure they can show you how to pop the cylinder out.

7. Other products to consider in residential re-keying.

Not only can you make good money servicing locks on your customer's homes, but you can also offer other valuable products and services as well.

First, do not forget the peep hole. They come in a wide range of styles, colors and viewing angles and cost you as low as \$4.00. You can install these for as much as \$50. After a re-key job, ask the customer, "Have you ever considered a peep hole for security

reasons?” If the customer agrees, have him or her to stand at the front door and point to the exact spot where the peep hole should be.

Second, if your customer has had the door kicked in, you can make huge money by installing a door jamb reinforcer plate. Lowe’s and Home Depot have large strikes for repairing door jambs that have small damage. But there are larger, sturdier types available through your locksmith distributor.

Third, you can also sell sliding glass door security bars which attach to one door and butt up against the other. There are a host of other items to solve sliding glass door issues that are available through your locksmith distributor.

Fourth, there are latch guards that you can install that will keep people from using credit cards to slip the knobs open. These, however, are unsightly. You can find these at hardware stores or get them from your distributor.

Make note that one of the best things you can do is to spend a few hours reading the locksmith distributor catalogs. This will enable you to know the products and learn various issues that residential customers are facing. Also, you may find a way to sell other products to them that I have not caught onto yet! Of course, when you do sell a product, make sure it is a genuinely-needed product. If you “hard sell” items to customers and they later regret buying the product, not only might you lose them as customers, but they will also tell everybody in the neighborhood what you “did to them.”

Fifth, door wraps made by Don Jo or Mag are invaluable when there has been a break-in and the door itself has been splintered or the metal facing has been distorted. This wrap has a hole already cut into it. You simply place it where the lock is supposed to go, fasten it with screws, and reinstall a new lock. These plates will cover up damage and restore integrity to the door.

Sixth, you can install an Ilco Simplex deadbolt on the garage or side door. These will cost about \$100 and you can install them for \$200. This lock uses a mechanical code instead of a key. This is handy when people have kids, because kids are always losing keys. You can leave a keyed lock on the bottom so that the door can be locked, thus rendering useless the code lock. I sold 20 of these to one client!

Seventh, you can recommend a home fire safe. You can get these low-cost safes from your locksmith distributor. You can offer to bolt them down to the closet floor.

Advertising

There are a number of things you can do to get the word out that you have become a dedicated residential locksmith. Of course, you can spend any amount of money you wish to get where it is you want to be; but caution is in order here. If you go out and buy a yellow page ad, be prepared to spend at anywhere from \$75 to \$1000 per month. Do these ads generate? Sure they do. But remember that when you sign a contract, the phone book company will ask you, a novice, for a certain amount up front. You will also be paying on this ad for an entire year. In the event the phone book company does not want to reissue the phone book for some reason, they might just decide to hold it over for a few more months and keep charging you past 12 months. However, if you live in a small town, gather up the appropriate yellow pages and see what other locksmiths are doing. How large are the ads? Are they in previous years' books? Are they color? What are the ads saying? Do your research and decide accordingly. I went into the AT&T yellow pages right out of the chute with an ad as large as my three competitors. The income was tremendous. I might also add that, when the ad hit the streets, I still did not know much of what I was doing. I did know the basics, however.

1. Yellow Page ads.

After checking up on your competition, think of how you would like your ad to appear, if you plan on going this route. Let me say here that, if you want the most calls for a full-time business, it will pay for you to dominate the locksmith section. Why? Because by doing so, the first calls will come to you. Color also helps, but is not necessary. Because you are new to the business, you may consider listing that you are a member of the Better Business Bureau or the local Chamber of Commerce. These two things will give you instant credibility. But, like all good things, joining clubs costs money. Be sure to keep the ad simple. You might consider a bold headline: “Residential Locksmith 615-999-9999”. Using bullets, list the services you offer, along with a few pictures of various types of locks. You might also mention free estimates and a warranty on the products you install. You may want to list that you have references, are an alumnus of such and such school, etc. However, as of 2013, it would seem that Yellow Page book advertising is becoming nonproductive. However, in your area you might have some success.

2. Business Cards.

This is a must if you are going to create a client base. But you can add a trick to your card. You can go to [Vista Print.Com](http://VistaPrint.Com) and order a two-sided card. You might as well also get the color added. On the front, list who you are and what you offer. On the rear side, head the card with “Let Me Give You an Estimate.” Below that, add “Job Description _____, Parts _____, Service Call _____ and Labor _____.”

You may not need to add all of this, but something like this is handy. Trust me when I say that business cards really work. I remember when cell phones first came out. The most unlikely guy imaginable began handing business cards out at church after worship was over. He would stand in the lobby and just hand those cards to everybody. I know you will not be surprised when I tell you that he became one of the most successful cell phone salesmen in America. Get the cards and hand them out. Leave them at restaurants, gyms, and anywhere else you find a counter top.

3. Business Stickers.

These have been wonderful for my business. Often, if I am at a job site, I can stick them on the back door, or on the safe, or on whatever I see. I do not, however, stick them where they will ruin the décor. Also, people who are in a hurry often lose business cards. When I give the sticker to the customer, they automatically look for a place to stick it -- usually on a cabinet door, refrigerator, or rolodex. You can find these stickers at NEBS.com online. I like the yellow and black vinyl stickers.

4. Key Stamp.

A metal key stamp will enable you to imprint your name and number on a key blank. Lay the key on a small piece of thick, flat iron, center the stamp, and hit it with a hammer. Be sure to remind your customer that your number is on the key copy. Do know that these stamps are custom made and will cost over \$100. The more characters your stamp uses, the higher the price. Some locksmiths use this on their stamp: "Locksmith 615-999-9999". It does not get cheaper than this. Your locksmith distributor can order this for you or you can find a maker online.

5. Door Knob Hangers.

If you want to target a certain subdivision, you can always have nice door knob hangers made. I will tell you that, if you are going to do this, make the hangers nice! If you go cheap, your prospective customers will think you are a shoddy locksmith. If you are soliciting in a ritzy neighborhood, you may want to add that you service Baldwin and Schlage. This way, the "beautiful people" will know that you understand high-priced locks. Check with NEBS.com or search online.

6. Vehicle Signage.

On this subject, I am the odd man out, as far as my competitors are concerned. I have too many commercial and residential clients that

do not want anybody in the workplace or in the neighborhood knowing that a locksmith is on the premises. I have been thanked for going incognito. Besides, vehicle signage tells thieves that you have equipment on board. Yes, signage will get you some business, but perhaps not as much as you think.

It is hard to say what kind of advertising will work best for you. Personally, I do not go into high school sports calendars, city maps, grocery store benches, pens, or key chains. And do not think for a moment that you have to advertise everywhere a solicitor tells you that you need to advertise. I know some locksmiths who just think they have to be everywhere in order to be in business. You would not believe the amount of money they waste. If you are going to build a part-time business in residential lock work, start slow and cheap. This way, you can handle the light work load and learn to be proficient. I would advise to go with the business cards. Just make it a priority to give 5 or 10 cards out per day for 3 months. Just do it. And then do it all over again. Oftentimes, the first card gets thrown away.

7. Website.

Yes, do get the website. Check out Vista Print online. You can get a three- page website for under \$6.00 per month. Vista Print has a number of add-on features you can use to upgrade your website so that it shows up on the search engines and Google maps. Just how effective is the web for locksmiths? As of this day, I feel that the results are mixed. Yes, I do get jobs from it; but I also still get jobs from the yellow pages. Although Vista Print does not have the best sites in the world, they do have pre-made templates that you can use that make building your site a breeze. It really is simple to do. There is something about web advertising that you should know: When it comes to locksmiths, the scams abound online. (More later on this.) Because my site comes up very high in the natural search results for Google, I am a target for the scam artists. One lock scam company used my personal name and business name to enter a business listing under Judy's something-or-other. It was not Judy's List. Once the scam artists listed me at the site, using a false local address and their own forwarded number, those false numbers appeared below my legitimate search result. If people were using the Google search result as a phone book and just calling the phone numbers listed under the hyper link, they would be getting the scam company. If, however, they clicked on my link "A-Best Locksmith" they would safely go to my site and get my correct number. Let me add that, because of this, they also conned an east coast company into sending my checks to themselves! Do get the site though. If you would like to advertise on Google, or some other similar search engine, do it yourself. But be advised. As a small locksmith, it will be difficult for you to afford expensive "clicks". I have paid as high as \$30 for a click and did not even get the job. I would avoid using YP and HIBU. They are no longer relevant. If you do use Google, call them up and they can easily set up your click campaign. However, as a locksmith who focuses on narrow fields, I have come to believe that "pay-per-click" is a non-performer. Word of mouth advertising is by far that best form of advertising you can use!

8. Contact Realtors.

Realtors are an excellent target for your residential lock service. Most realtors work with and for banks. In the event a house is foreclosed on, or if the homeowners abandon it, the realtor takes over the property for the bank. The house will need to be re-keyed because, in most cases, the home owner takes the keys with them. Even if the realtor has the keys, the bank requires that the old keys be made obsolete. You can solicit work from realtors by convincing them that you are competent and that you can give them the best service and price. Generally, price is what the realtors are concerned about. Service should not be a problem because you are a residential locksmith. One important thing you will need to remember when dealing with realtors is that, if you bill them, it may take as long as seven months to get paid. Many realtors, after only three years of service, have only twenty thousand dollars a year to show for their efforts. Generally speaking, realtors do not want to pay you out of their checking account while they wait for the banks to pay them. If you bill a realtor, they will just pass your bill on to the bank. Since the bank does not know you, and since you do not know them or where they are located, they will not pay you. I would suggest that, before doing work with a realtor, you agree that payment is to be made when the job is complete. You might tell the realtor that, since you are doing the work at a discount rate, you expect to be paid when the job is done. Something else to consider is that realtors often require a house to be keyed to a particular Kwikset key code. You can go online and find what they are or you can ask a realtor. Then, you can have a local locksmith cut a set for you. Better yet, buy the Framon code machine or the A-1 key punch and cut them yourself. (These machines, by the way, will also enable you to offer master keying for owners of rental homes.)

Business Insurance

Business insurance is going to be a must for you if you are going to be self-employed. Do you need it right out of the chute? Probably not. Not if you are working on friends' homes. However, when you start working on the homes of people you do not know, then you must have insurance to protect yourself. You should be able to get one to two million dollars' coverage for about \$350 to \$500 per year. That does sound like a great deal of money; but, in the long run, it will be a tax deduction. Just call your local insurance agent. If he cannot get this kind of insurance for you, he will know someone who can.

Customer Service

Customer service is what will make or break you as a business person. Just think for a moment about how you have been treated by the person at the automotive parts counter. I cannot say that I have ever met a parts person who had a personality that exuded excitement at seeing a customer. To me, it always seemed that I was bothering them whenever I needed to order a part. Think about the plumbers and electricians who promised you they would be at your home at 9 o'clock and never showed. But worse, they never called you back to reschedule the job. What about the guy who arrived three hours late and did not call to tell you he was backed up? Or can you remember taking a day off from work so you could meet the cable guy to install your cable and he never showed? We all have a horror story when it comes to getting a service provider to show up on time. For me the bottom line is this: Do it to me just one time and, not only will you never get asked back, but I will take 10 of my friends and tell them what happened and who did it. If you do not learn anything else from this book, learn this: Customer service is key. So, please pay attention to the facets of customer service that I will cover here. It is because of my keen sense of customer service that I have gotten to where I am today.

1. Answering the phone.

This is your first impression on a customer. In my area, when the locksmiths answer the phone, they sound uninterested and impatient with the customer. You cannot do this and hope to land the jobs. I cannot tell you how many people have become my customers because of how I talked with them on the phone. Here is one of my phone conversations: "This is David, A-Best Locksmith, how may I help you?" I say it clearly, slowly, and concisely. I say it so well that people pause because they think they are hearing an answering machine. The customer then asks if I work on house locks. I then say, "Sure, what kind of problem are you having?" After listening to the

customer, I will say, “Well, let me give you an estimate. Where is the house located? Okay. Since you are close by, I would say that a \$45 service call and \$15 per lock cylinder would be the right price. When would you like to have it done?” Then, I schedule the appointment. Just be friendly and interested. If you can accomplish that, you will land more calls. In fact, people have told me that my price was not the lowest. They said they were sold on my offer because I was so friendly and all the other guys sounded rude. Practice your opening lines and do not speak in a monotone. Speak with pitch variation and interest!

2. Get the shirt.

No ifs and buts about this. You will not show up with a non-descript shirt of any kind. If you want the part, play the part. Do not wear a t-shirt. I do not care if your name is silk-screened across it. They do not look good and they will show grease and oil unless they are black. Besides, your gut will stick out. Go to your local embroidery shop and get a dark navy blue button down shirt. Get the ones that have the button down collar. Have the shop embroider your business name on the left and your name on the right. Have one for each day or be sure you have a clean one each day you work. Navy blue works well because you can get tons of grease or oil on it and it will still look new. Wear this shirt with cargo pants, dark jeans, or khaki. The khaki really looks impressive. If you do what I just told you to do, you will have beaten a number of your competitors. Just look as good as the money your client is paying you. I remember meeting a locksmith in Pompano, Florida, a number of years back. He walked into the locksmith school that he attended to ask one of the teachers a question. He was on a safe job and was having problems opening the safe. He had just come from the commercial job site and he was wearing nothing but cut-off jeans. He had no shirt and no shoes. Another locksmith in Nashville wears Satanic skull rings all over his fingers and has skulls across the dashboard of his truck. His clothing is EMO black with all of the EMO trinkets. Sad to say that many locksmiths today may look no better. Your clothing is one of your

first impressions. You may also want to consider hiding your tattoos and removing your earrings. That crap scares people; and you cannot scare people and be in the security industry.

3. The vehicle condition.

My plumber, whom I have since fired, showed up at my residence for the last time. He was still driving this beat-up old van that would not start when it was supposed to start. I am sure it was leaking oil as well, though my gravel driveway never showed it. Imagine what kind of impression you would make by pulling up to a two-million-dollar home to do a \$400 lock re-key in an old, beat-up, oil-dripping jalopy. Let me tell you here and now that you would probably not be asked back and certainly not referred. You would also embarrass the people into whose driveway you drove. Of course times are hard; but showing up in such a contraption would tell everybody that you are not a successful locksmith and that you simply do not care about yourself or your clients. I can remember seeing carpet cleaners (I used to be one) show up to clean a house in a vehicle that was filthy inside and out. Sorry, dudes, you ain't coming in my house! Drive a halfway decent vehicle and keep it clean. (We will talk about vehicle set up later.)

4. Honesty.

Today I did a job for a client that has locations all over Tennessee. The district manager also called a month ago and asked me to come up to a distant location to re-key some doors. I told her what the fee was going to be and she was shocked! Not good. I told her, "You're right, that is a high price; but coming to your location and getting back to my base will take 2 to 3 hours out of my day. Divide my cost by the hours and you will see that it is a bargain. Isn't there anybody closer by who can help you? I mean, I will come if you cannot find anybody else. I will not leave you hanging there with an unsecured door." The district manager was astounded. She could not believe a locksmith would talk himself out of a job. She found another locksmith that was closer. That was sheer luck on her part. Today,

when I arrived at her other location closer to my area, she instructed the regular manager to trust my bid for a high paying door lock retrofit. She also told her manager the story above and said the company will not use another locksmith. Honesty does pay.

If you go to my website, www.a-bestlocksmith.com, you will see a DIY section for commercial and residential locks. You will also find a list of wholesale prices. Simply put, I make available to clients my cost for goods I am selling them. Of course, I do not do that when I am on site selling and installing the hardware; but they can go to my site and find anything they want to know. Besides, with the advent of the internet, there are no more secrets.

Another way to present yourself as the honest guy is to point out options with differing prices. I would say, “Well, a grade 2 lock would be nice, but expensive. If it were me, I would go the cheaper route.” Or, if a customer is purchasing a new home and the locks are really nasty and beat up, you can say, “As much as I would like to take your money, you might be better off going to Lowe’s and getting new locks. Since you are handy, you should not have any problem installing them. If you need me, however, I will be glad to quote you a per-door price for installing the locks you choose.” The bottom line comes down to just telling the truth. Do not try to sell any kind of hardware to people who do not need the hardware.

Also, do not be afraid to tell your customers to shop around. If you quote a job and sense some price hesitancy on the part of the customer, you can say, “Be sure to check around with some other locksmiths to make sure you’re getting a fair price. If I can help you, be sure to call back and I will be happy to take care of your lock problem.”

5. Scheduling the appointment.

To schedule appointments, I use a college ruled notebook. On each page, I write the date and my starting car mileage for tax purposes.

Below that, I write #1. Name of client, address, phone, price quoted, and job description. Be sure that when you schedule a job for 9 o'clock in the morning, you be there at 8:55 a.m. If you are going to be late, call the customer ahead of time and tell her why you are late and ask if she would rather schedule the job a little later or on another day. People appreciate this kindness and will reward you for it. If you make people wait, or do not show up at all, you will lose that customer and get your name dragged through the dirt. Be motivated to be the on-time person, and you will be even or probably ahead of your competitors.

6. On the job site.

Go to the door with your kit, ring the door bell, and introduce yourself with a business card. Before going in, you can take off your shoes or put shoe covers over them. Your customer will think, “Wow! If he is that meticulous, I know he will be meticulous with my locks!” Ask the client to show you the doors that need to be serviced and ask how many keys she will need. Beware of children reaching into holes in the door because metal doors may be sharp. Also, be on your guard against children reaching into your pin kit or tool kit. If there are dogs and cats in the house, ask that they be put away in a closed room for a short time. The last thing you need is getting bitten or having an animal flip over your pin kit. Just in case you are wondering, I re-key house doors by going from door to door. Make sure you set your pin kit down on the outside of the door to avoid scratching the floor, or carry a nice piece of leather on which to lay it. The customer will be impressed by your carefulness. When you are done, be sure to wipe away any grease from the doors. When the job is completed, hand the customer the keys, or demonstrate the repair and say, “Now, I am going to return these tools to the vehicle and get a receipt. Why don’t you take the keys and check that the doors are working to your satisfaction.” After you come back with the receipt book, ask the customer if everything was done to her satisfaction. After she writes you the check, tell her to call you if there is any problem whatsoever. Believe it or not, sometimes you will get a call back. If you do, be timely. If you do not respond quickly, the customer will think that you took her money and left her in the lurch.

Vehicle Ideas

I always like to look at the faces of my competitors when they notice that I am driving an unmarked 2008 Ford Focus. Not only is it a small car, but it is also a two-door. Because I no longer service automotive locks, and because gas mileage is important, I no longer have to have a large service vehicle. Believe it or not, the trunk space in a Ford Focus is incredible. I have room for all of my tools, two key machines, and a nice selection of locks and keys. The back seat of the car is where I keep most of my lock parts, manuals, tap kit, socket set, and pin kits. In the event I go on a vacation with my wife, it does not take me very long to have the entire thing emptied. My key machines are 12 volt DC units and run from a wire I ran from the battery. I plug the machines into the power by use of standard outlet sockets used for AC power.

Although I do like the Ford Focus because it has been getting 35 or more miles per gallon of gasoline, I think I may consider a very small pickup next time. I do like the idea of getting out of the rain when I am making keys. I did have a pickup such as this years ago. Then I went to a Ford F-150 with a topper. But because of the price of gasoline, I gave the truck instead to my son who is in college and who does not need to drive as much.

Just remember that, in residential lock servicing, you will not need much space for tools and equipment. Even if you add commercial lock servicing later, you will still not need much space.

The key to making space for your tools is organization. I keep my followers, drivers, pick set, shims, Allen wrenches, Kwikset cylinder removal tool, pliers, and spare factory keys in an electrician's pouch around my waist. It takes up very little space when I put it into the vehicle. My deadbolt installation kit is kept in a small tool bag that I purchased at Lowe's. Locks are kept in small boxes. My keys are kept

in a small Key Kab which is no longer being made. However, in residential lock servicing, you will need only a few types of keys. You can just keep these in their fifty-count boxes placed together in a larger box. I keep miscellaneous tools and parts in a large plastic tool box. When I open my trunk and cut keys, I just grab my Rytan machine, place it on top of the box, and cut away.

About Scam Locksmith Companies

Today in America there may be more locksmith scams than there are real locksmiths. Of course, I cannot verify this. If you will pick up any yellow page phone book and look under “Locksmiths” and then in the in-column section, you will see the real locksmiths and then the suspicious locksmiths. Generally, the real in-column locksmiths will be listed there and have a display ad. Or, the real locksmiths will have a nice in-column ad that is anywhere from 1 inch to 3 inches long. However, this may not always be the case. Scam locksmiths can do this too. But if you will look in-column, you will see some interesting names listed. Although many legitimate locksmiths go by A-Best, A-One, AAA, etc., many scam locksmiths carry this “A” thing further. You may see AAA Always Available All the Time Locksmith or 24 Hour All the Time Locksmith. Usually, there will be tons of them, and the phone number is often the same for several of them. The phone numbers are local phone numbers. Anybody can call the phone company and get a local number and have it forwarded to a cell phone number. This is called remote call forwarding. By the way, if you need a local number of an area, you can request such a number and have it remote call forwarded to your cell phone. I do this. Just ask your phone company about the charges. The idea behind this concept is that more local people will call you because you have a local-looking number. In my phone book there are more scams listed than there are real locksmiths. But the phone number concept here is not the crime.

The scam locksmiths are also proliferating the internet by buying top placement in the banner ads on Google. They are buying these slots on a pay-per-click basis. How much are they paying? As of the date of this writing, I would not be surprised if they are paying as high as \$15 or \$20 per click. You are thinking that this is too much money, right? Guess again. For them, it is a small fee. I will tell you why in a moment. Go online and Google “Locksmiths” and include the name

of your city and look at the paid ads at the top of the search results. I mean, the very top of the Google page. Now, before I make my accusations, let me say that there are some legitimate companies that use pay-per-click. I have done this for years. But many, if not most, of the legitimate locksmiths appear to the right of the search listings. Now, as of the date of this writing, you will see locksmiths advertising service call rates well below what you know is reasonable. When other locksmiths in your area are getting \$50 to \$75 service calls, you will instinctively know that \$14, \$15, and \$19 service calls are suspicious. My friends, you rarely get anything for that small amount. When you see these low rates, you have a red flag.

Here is how the scam works. A few individuals in a large city get together and start a locksmith service company. Their goal is to make money by advertising their service to every city in every state in America. They get into all the phone books free because they have a local, call-forwarded number in every area, and they are on the internet. Because locksmiths are notoriously independent people, these companies can seldom find reputable locksmiths to do their work. So, when a customer calls the “local” phone number they find on the web or in the phone book, the scam company sends out anybody they can find to serve the customer. Many times, the technician has never met the company owners. One of my clients needed service to re-key a front door when I was out of town. They got the scam people. The tech came out, had one poorly-copied key that was so disfigured from being a copy of a copy of a copy, keyed the door lock with that key, handed the manager the key, charged an enormous sum, and told them to go get the key copied. Of course, a key cannot be copied if it has been corrupted. After I returned, they called me to re-key the lock.

The scam company pays the technician half of what he can get out of the customer. So, naturally, the technician is going to gouge the customer because he cannot afford to go out for half of a real wage. One customer of mine called me and asked me to help them with their

locks. The manager showed me a bill for re-keying two locks on one door. The total was \$375. The bill for this job at that time should have been around \$85. The scam company tech overcharged and double-charged. One business in my town hired another scam company. The price was exorbitant. After the bill was not paid in two days, the scam tech showed up minutes before closing time and removed the locks.

The scam companies use the \$14 to \$19 service call to lure customers into calling. The scam tech generally misleads the customer as to how the job will be charged. He will generally say something like, "Oh, it should be about \$30 in labor." After the job is done, he will present the customer with a bill for over \$200 and threaten to sue if it is not paid. One friend of mine was out of town and locked his keys in the car. He called a locksmith who worked for the scam company. The locksmith opened his car and presented a bill for \$200. My friend refused to pay that amount. Very quickly, my friend received a phone call and the lock company threatened to sue him. He replied, "That is fine with me. When you get here, I will buy you lunch." Because he stood his ground and refused to pay the exorbitant amount, the scam tech took the \$60 he was offered, which was fair for the job.

When you are talking with prospective customers, tell them what is going on in the locksmith industry and tell them to beware of \$14 service calls. Ask them, "Do you think you can get anything of quality for \$14?" The answer will be "no".

Business Licensing

There are three licenses you may need to have. First, check with your local courthouse to find out whether or not you need a city permit to offer business services in your city. Second, you must check with your state's Department of Revenue to get a business license. They will require you to collect sales taxes and pay them monthly or quarterly. I recommend registering as a sole proprietor because it is easier to do business this way. Just make sure you have a good insurance policy that covers your work. Third, you may also need to check to determine if your state requires locksmiths to have a locksmith license. Call your state's Department of Commerce for this information. In the event you are a felon, you may have a problem becoming a locksmith. However, if your crime was long ago, there may be no problem.

What Do You Do Now?

1. Begin researching the educational tools you will need. Earlier, I recommended the DVD for keying locks and picking locks. I would start there. Or, you can spring for a full home study course. Remember that these courses will cover topics you probably will not want to use. Do note that the most important thing to learn is re-keying and picking locks. To equip yourself better for education, buy locks from Lowe's and practice on them! Put in a deadbolt for a friend for free. Practice. Lock work is not hard.

2. Get the prices together for the recommended tools. Note that things such as hole saws, files, screwdrivers, Allen wrenches, WD-40, etc., are available at Lowe's. Make sure the hole saws are rated to cut metal. Just because a hole saw is made of metal does not mean it will cut metal. Do not buy the Lowe's deadbolt hole saw kit. Get the nice individual hole saws because they will cut better and last longer.

3. Check with your city and state offices for the proper licenses.

4. Get your business cards and invoices made up and ready. You can get a metal tray at Office Max that will hold the invoices. I use the three-part invoices that are used for invoice machines. You have seen them. They come attached one to the other, at the top of the first invoice to the bottom of the next. Then, I just rip off the amount I need to stock the tray. Or you can buy three-part loose invoices.

5. Get out there and start handing the cards out! Do it over and over again! Be punctual, be neat, be friendly, be honest. By using great customer service and by doing your work conscientiously and carefully, you will become known as the residential "go-to" guy in this industry. Other locksmiths will be doing residential work as well, but you will be the residential pro!

Rekeying Lock Cylinders

This is a new addition to this book and shows you how to rekey lock cylinders. Of course, you can always go online and buy a DVD that shows you how to rekey a lock cylinder. However, what I am about to show you should cover 90% of what you will need to know when it comes to 1) removing a lock cylinder, 2) shimmiing a lock cylinder open in the event the operating key is missing, 3) rekeying the Kwikset Smartkey and Schlage SecureKey, and 4) resetting the Kwikset SmartKey in the event there are no keys available for an existing SmartKey lock. (It must be noted here that, to date, there is no method to reset the Schlage SecureKey in the event the key is lost.)

Also, in the event you would like to purchase the equipment necessary for lock rekeying, as well as equipment for deadbolt installations, please go to www.deadboltsfordollars.com. There, I offer tools and locks for sale at a very reasonable price.

Let us begin by looking at the basic pin tumbler lock technology by reproducing here my book on lock rekeying, which is also available at Amazon at a reduced price. Since you have purchased this book, there will be no need to purchase the separate book on lock rekeying. In fact, I will include other thoughts and photos that are not included in the other book. Go to the next page.

The Basics of Lock Cylinder Keying (Make Few Hundred Dollars Each Month!)



By David Calvin

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**The Basics of Lock Cylinder Keying
(For Making A Few Hundred Dollars Each Month)**

By David Calvin

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Introduction

There are a number of things that are easier than keying a lock cylinder. However, keying a lock cylinder can be learned in as little as ten minutes. Once a person learns how to key a lock cylinder, he or she can easily begin making additional income keying locks for friends, family and then others; and that is what makes being a locksmith an interesting and lucrative part-time or full-time profession.

Although I have been a locksmith for over 25 years, I will honestly admit that keying lock cylinders is very simple and very easy. I can go into a home that has three doors with six locks and have those locks keyed in less than thirty minutes. However, the speed of that service will be determined by a number of factors. I will leave that to one side for the moment. After you have learned the procedures of lock keying, you be able to enter a home, key it quickly, make over \$100, and be home in time to watch the ballgame.

People around you need their locks keyed for a number of reasons. First, people going through divorces always lock one another out their homes. Second, homes and businesses have to fire their cleaning services because of theft. Third, kids get kicked out. Fourth, people who buy homes, even new ones, know that the contractor has the key. Fifth, the key that your neighbor hides under the rock always comes up missing. But, not only will you need to key locks for people, but you will have to also extract a broken key, lube the locks, and then realign the strike plates to insure the locks engage the door jamb properly. In this book, I will show you how to do just that.

Who Will Benefit From This Book?

This book is for the person who needs that extra money at the end of the month but does not want to own a business. Can a person use this information to create an ongoing business? Yes. In fact, what you will learn here must be learned before you become a professional. Because this book is being offered at such a low price, you may be thinking that there is little to be learned here. If you think that such is the case, search on Amazon and buy my four other locksmith books and you will be spending around \$36 for the bunch. You may decide later to purchase them; but here is where you start with the hands-on learning.

What Tools Will I Need?

David Calvin makes all of these tools available to you at www.deadboltsfordollars.com. My web store offers these items in package form in order to save you money. However, if you find you need to purchase individual tools, you can purchase them here as well.

Although it would be nice if you bought the Ilco Mini Mite 008 key machine (available online), it is not mandatory that you have one if you are going to be keying cylinders a few times each month. In fact, initially, I wouldn't bother buying one. If you do have the money to spend, then get one; but I will proceed with our project assuming you will not have a key machine. Since you will not be using a key machine when you start, you will not need key blanks either. I just saved you about \$750!

Here are some items you will need in order to key lock cylinders. I will begin with a picture of the Ilco Mini Mite 008.



1. Above is the Ilco Mini Mite and it is available in 12 volt DC and in AC. If you want to run it to your car battery, then get the 12 volt DC. If you want to plug it into your customer's outlet, or use a power inverter in your car, then get the AC. The AC models sell better later on if you decide to leave the business; but inverters are pricey. This is the best of the inexpensive machines available. It is a key duplicator only, not a key code machine.



Figure 17 - Available at www.deadboltsfordollars.com

2. This is a pin kit. These little pins are what many people refer to as tumblers. This kit is the .003 kit because the pins are sized in three thousand increments. Later, I will show you how to choose pins and how to choose them when a customer hands you a worn down key. This is very easy to do. I like this kit because it has a pull-out tray where you can keep all of your other small keying tools. You will pay around \$250 for this kit. Or, you can buy a specific Kwikset kit, which will be used in most locks used in homes today, and the Schlage kit.



Figure 18 – Follower Set

3. This is the HPC hollow brass follower kit. This is what you will use to push the lock plug out of the lock shell (in less than three seconds!) This kit will run about \$35. Or just buy the standard HPC single follower for much cheaper.



Figure 19 - Kwikset Cylinder Removal Tool

4. This is the Kwikset cylinder removal tool. It costs about \$3. It wouldn't hurt to have two or three of these as they bend if you use them with excessive force.

5. Set of Phillips and pan head screwdrivers.
6. An electric or battery operated drill.

7. A one inch spade bit to be used in deepening or repositioning lath strikes.
8. Drill bits.



Figure 20 - Pin Tumbler Tweezers

9. HPC pin tumbler tweezers. These are used to replace top pins when they fall out.



Figure 21 - Shims

10. Shims. These are used to open lock cylinders when the keys are missing. These are used with a pick.



Figure 22 - Pick Set

11. Here is the nicer pick set. I do not think you need this. You will need some tension wrenches, rakes, and broken key extractors. You can ask your locksmith supplier about these. You do not need to buy an entire kit.



Figure 23 - Tension Wrench

12. Here is a tension wrench. When you pick a lock, this is what applies turning pressure to the lock plug.



Figure 24 - Rake Pick

13. Here is a rake. Once the lock plug is under pressure, you simply rake this against the pins in the lock until the lock opens.



Figure 25 - Broken Key Extractor

14. This is the broken key extractor kit. This goes into the keyway and grabs the broken key. You will need this. I do not know why you wouldn't want to show up at a friend's house and make \$50 removing a broken key!



Figure 26 - Plug Spinner

15. This is the plug spinner. Sometimes you can pick a lock in the

wrong direction very easily. If you do, this tool enables you to spin it around quickly before it relocks itself.

16. You will also need to some precut keys. You will need Kwikset and Schlage. You may also do a little looking around in your area and see what brands of locks and keys are being used. Usually, you will see Weslock, Kwikset, Schlage, and Yale. However, the most commonly used locksets are Kwikset (which will include MOST brands at Lowe's and Home Depot which use the Kwikset keyway) and Schlage. Or, call a local locksmith and ask for six each of the different types you need. Or, you can buy some practice locks and have Lowe's cut you extras.

17. You can buy the new Schlage Secure Key lock change kit at Lowe's or Home Depot. This kit allows you to re-key Schlage's "customer rekeyable" locks which customers hate re-keying.



Figure 27 - Kwikset Reset Cradle

18. This is the Kwikset Smart Key cradle which enables you to reset the lock when the keys are lost or are not working. \$29. Note the directions on the unit.

A Word about Lock Picking

It would be nice if you learned how to pick locks open. However, there are some things that you need to know about lock picking. If

you have a criminal record, forget it. You will never be able to get a lock pick set. You can pick open standard Kwikset and Schlage locks very easily though. You can find this information online. What I do on most homes, though, is this. I insert a tension wrench and then use the rake pick and just rub the pick over the pins back and forth, up and down, this way and that way, until the lock opens. Basically, you are trying to make the lock think a key has been inserted. After you rake the pins enough times, you will eventually find the right spot, and the lock will open. This would be the ideal way to open your friend's house when he is locked out.

Homeowner Rekeyable Locks

We must, however, make a note here about the Kwikset Smart Key and the Schlage Secure Key. These are the newer locks designed for homeowners that are rekeyable by homeowners. Yes, some homeowners will rekey these locks themselves. Some will not. In the event a home is purchased, the new homeowners will not have any idea of the types of locks that are on the house. When they move into the house, they will not want to be bothered with changing their own locks.

The Schlage SecureKey locks have a “plus” sign above the keyway. This will be your indication that you can rekey them after first purchasing the kit from Home Depot or Lowe's. I will tell you how to do this later on. I will not include a picture here.

The Kwikset Smart Key system can be identified by looking at the front of the lock cylinder. To the left or the right of the key hole, depending on the locks installation, you will see a small slot. Look at the picture below.



Figure 28 - Note the slot near the key hole. This is where the change tool is inserted. You can buy new keys and a tool at Lowe's in the lock section.

In order to rekey these locks, you will need the Kwikset Smart Key kit from Lowe's or Home Depot. This kit comes with a small tool and a

few extra keys.

Changing the Kwikset Smart Key Lock

Here is your first lock change lesson. After you read this, go out and buy a Kwikset Smart key lock. It will include directions and a tool so you will be able to change the lock over to a new key. You can find the steps at Kwikset.com. Before we begin, I will tell you that homeowners often end up doing this wrong and often just scramble the combinations and make the lock no longer key operable. There is a tool, however, called the Kwikset Cradle that includes instructions on how to key a Smart Key Lock when the keys are lost or the combination is scrambled. This is available through your locksmith supplier.

First, you need to have the old key and a new key. Insert the new key and turn 45 degrees to the right and stop. That would be a quarter turn. Use the above photo in order to visualize the process.

Second, once the key is in the 45% position, insert the proper tool (I use a broken pick) until you hear/feel a click. Remove the tool.

Third, remove the old key without turning it. You want the cylinder to stay in the 45 degree position.

Fourth, insert the new key fully and turn back all the way to the left. I also turn it back and forth left to right after that step in order to verify that the lock has taken the new key and that the operation is smooth.

Because you can key these quickly, I often reduce the price for the job. If I do three doors and six locks, I might charge \$75 to \$95.

In the event a customer has lost the keys to these locks, use the Kwikset Cradle. The directions are included with the cradle.

Changing the Schlage Secure Key Lock

In order to change these locks, you will need to transfer the customer's working key onto the Secure Key blue blank which become the tool that enables you to rekey the lock. You can have this done at Lowe's or Home Depot. While you are there, pick up the NEW kit that you are going to use to create the new key. Be sure to get enough regular key copies for your customer.

I am going to describe this as if the lock is installed with the “plus” sign on top. If you lock is upside down, nothing changes except the change position.

First, take the blue key that has the customer’s old working key cut onto it. Insert it into the lock and turn the key to the 11 o’clock position. Remove it.

Second, insert NEW blue key in that same position. Turn to the twelve o’clock position. I always turn it back and forth. Remove the key. The lock is now rekeyed. Test the new regular keys.

Understanding How a Lock Cylinder Works

Below is a picture of a key with the pins removed from the cylinder. I did this to show you and explain to you how the cuts of the key relate to the pins in the lock. This is a Schlage commercial lock and key. It is a 6 pin key because it takes 6 pins. That was easy enough! However, locks from Lowe’s have 5 pins.



1. Every key has a series of cuts. The first cut, or the number one cut, begins closest to the head, or bow, of the key. You will notice that the first cut in the picture above is a deep cut. You will also notice that

the pin is a long pin. On the reverse of this factory cut key there is a code. It might be something like 845444. That code says that the first pin is a Schlage number 8 pin. The second is a number 4 pin and so on. Your pin kit will have all the sizes listed on the lid so you can easily go to the proper pin tray and get the number 8 pin. You would simply drop it into the first hole shown on the lock plug. When this key is inserted into the plug, a number 8 DEPTH cut on the key will enable a number 8 PIN to sit in the plug so that the pin is flush with the top of the plug. So, if you use pins numbered 845444 in the plug, a SHEAR line is created and there is no resistance when the key is turned. However, if you put pins numbered 885444, the second pin would stick up out of the plug above and keep the lock plug from turning in the SHELL, or outer part of the cylinder. For our purposes here, however, I want you to understand how the key is understood. A blank key would have ZERO cuts. So,

2. Every cut in the key has a predetermined pin size, listed as such in the kit, that corresponds to that pin. Again, a number 8 cut has a number 8 pin.

3. Although some brands have original keys with the pin sizes already stamped on them, Kwikset does not. However, if you remember that the deepest cut in the key represents the longest pin, or highest number, you should have no trouble. Kwikset, and copy cats like Callin, EZ Set, etc., all use the same sized pins and key depths. Since Kwikset has a 6 pin as the deepest pin and a 1 pin as the shallowest pin, you can just guess which size to use. Using your pin kit, pull out a number 6 pin. If it sticks out of the plug and is not flush with the plug, try a number 5 pin. It is that easy.

4. But, often, you will go to a person's house and they will hand you an old key that is worn. That key will work perfectly in all of the other locks. Let us say that the key is a Kwikset key. So, the person says, "I want a new lock on my garage door because the old one is broken." You go to Lowe's, get the new lock, and pin it up to the Kwikset pinning specifications on your pin kit. You put it together and it doesn't work. Why? Because the key is worn or cut poorly. When you are handed a worn key in this situation, just drop or raise your pin sizes by .003 of an inch until you visually see that there is a smooth shear line. Kwikset and other home quality locks are often forgiving and allow you a certain amount of error in your pinning provided you are within a pin or two.

Let's Rekey a Cylinder



Here I have a commercial lock cylinder ready for keying. I have my follower kit, a screwdriver, keys, and a probe (or paperclip). If you are keying a Kwikset cylinder or any other cylinder from Lowe's (except the Smart Key and Secure Key), the steps are exactly the same. The lock shown above is just a representative cylinder. I will proceed with the description of how to rekey this cylinder and what I show you is basic to all pin tumbler cylinders.

1. First, I have to get the cylinder out of the lock. If you have a commercial grade lock, you will have to have a key to remove the lock cylinder from the door. You can tell if a home has a commercial style lock by looking at the stem to which the knob or lever is attached on the OUTSIDE of the door. You will see a slot or a poke hole. Now, let me say also that the regular Schlage home locks have this slot as well as many Kwikset levers. This means that you will not have to remove the entire lock from the door in order to service the lock. If you see the slot/poke hole, insert the key, turn to the left or right and, while holding the key in place, insert a small flat blade driver or paperclip into the hole, push, and then pull the knob or lever off.

(NOTE – Kwikset and other copy cat locks from Lowe's can still be

removed without the key. Just insert the driver into the slot while turning the inside lock button. You will feel and see the driver start to move in. Just pull off the knob or lever.)

(NOTE – Some copy cat knobs have a stem with a hole. But, when you look into the hole, you cannot see the release. While looking into the hole, turn the outside knob slowly in either direction until you see the catch. When you do, depress the catch and pull the knob off. This can be tedious sometimes; but stick with it. It will help if you keep a key in the cylinder when you do this because the key cylinder often falls into the knob body and it will take you a few minutes to get it out.)



2. Here we have the rear of the lock cylinder. You will see that this particular cylinder has a ferrel or cap with a small spring loaded pin on the lower left which holds it in place. Using a paperclip or other probe, depress the pin and unscrew the cap counter clockwise.



3. Remove the cap, the pin, the spring and the tailpiece and set them aside and keep them secure. Be advised that a stiff breeze can carry these parts away! Now, we are ready to use our follower to remove the plug. But, before we do that, I need to show you why we need the follower.

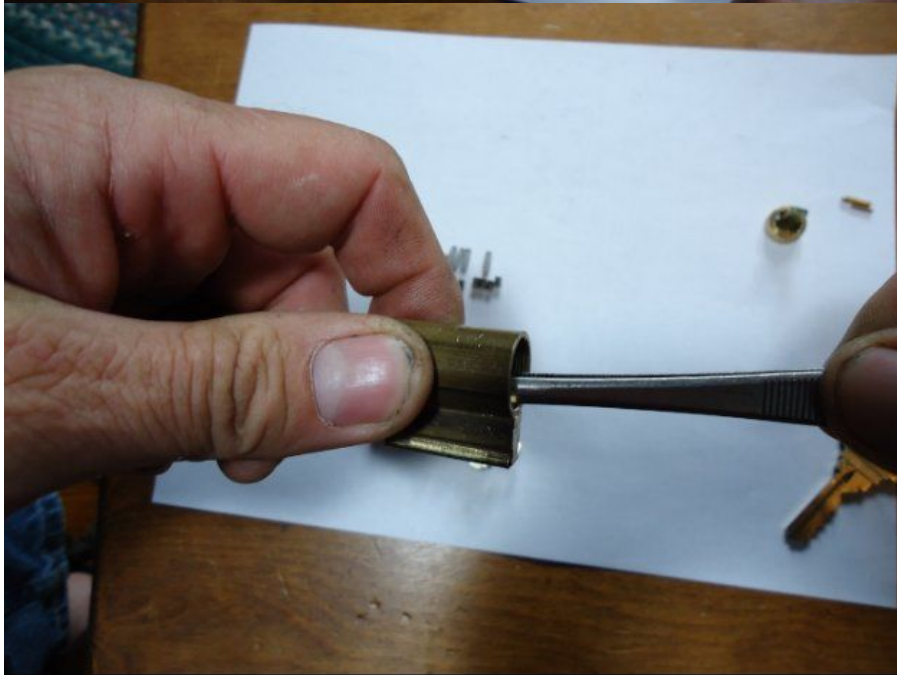
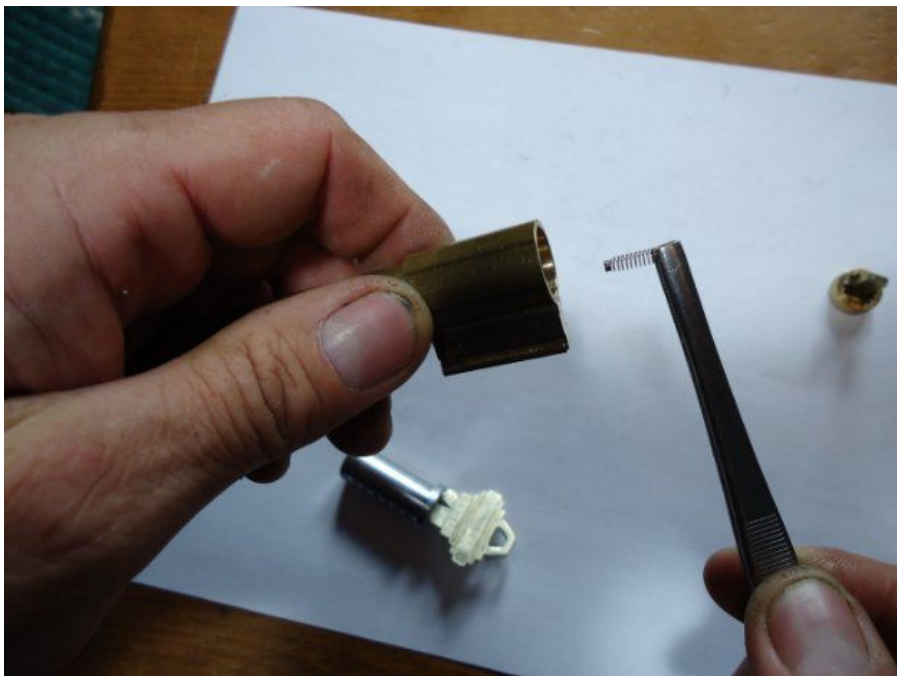


4. In the top of the lock cylinder shell, there are TOP PINS and SPRINGS. How they are laid out in the above photo is how they are installed in the shell. (The shell is just above the springs.) When the cylinder is working properly, each pin in the plug is held under pressure by a top pin which is being pushed by a spring. If there were no springs, the bottom pins would not seat properly into the key cuts and create a shear line. Sometimes I key locks and notice that, when I insert the working key, the key will not turn until I tap the cylinder. That means a spring and/or a top pin is missing. If this is the case, the bottom pin is not being seated and is obstructing the shear line. By using the FOLLOWER, you are able to keep all the top pins and springs in place without ever having to mess with them.



5. In order to remove the plug with the pins, insert the working key and turn it to the right just so the bottom pins are not touching the top pins. Do not remove the plug and make sure it is still fully seated in the shell. Now, using your follower, push the plug out while MAINTAINING pressure on the plug with the follower CONTINUOUSLY. After the plug is fully removed, rekey the cylinder using the appropriate key and pins.

6. Now, reverse the process. Now, try the key. If the key goes in but has difficulty coming out, you will need to remove the plug with your follower and, by using a small flat blade driver, back the follower out top pin by top pin, and, using your driver, allow each top pin to come up slightly in order to allow any tiny MASTER PINS to come out. They will usually fall out by themselves. STOP when you get to the third pin and then start over with the last two or three by working from the rear end. It makes it easier. In the event you lose the top pins, you will need to use your HPC pin tweezers to reinstall the springs and top pins. In fact, when you get your tools and practice locks, you should practice this. Although it sounds hard, it really is not. When you reinstall the top pins, you will start with the middle pins and work your way out. Here is a picture below.



When you install the top pins, you insert the follower into the shell and stop at the third pin hole in. Then, install the spring, which drops into place easily. Use the tweezers and pick up a top pin, place it over the spring and plunge it down into the hole. It will be under spring tension. But, as you are holding it in the hole, slide the follower

forward until it is under the follower.

(NOTE- Kwikset locks have a cap on the top that is easily removable. The Schlage floating caps, however, are a disaster. If you remove one of these, you are in trouble. I often use duct tape to hold them down. In fact, these locks using the floating cap can come out of the package already off!)

Reassemble the cylinder and your keying is done.

Removing the Kwikset Cylinder from the Lock

In order to remove the Kwikset cylinder from the lock, remove the lock from the door. Take the lock body in your hands and you will see a tailpiece on the rear. The tailpiece has a round inner part that you can slip a Phillips driver into and turn either left or right. This part is what locks the lock. But it must be removed before rekeying the cylinder. Turn this movable shaft until it is in the middle of its travel distance. Then, using your Kwikset tool's pointed end, push up on the metal ring under the U shaped part of the spindle that is spring loaded and, while this is pressed, use your thumb to wiggle the round inner part of the spindle out. Once this has been removed, use the V shaped end of the Kwikset tool. Insert it into the hole in the back of the lock. The position it goes in is relative to the front of the lock. If you look at the front of the lock and note the key hole, imagine that, on the rear of this cylinder, at the 9 and 3 o'clock positions, there are two tabs. So, each point of the V on the tool depresses the tabs and punches the cylinder out. Insert the tool, push and wiggle. The cylinder should pop out. Or, you can go to Lowe's, buy your practice lock, and have him show you how it is done. To reinstall the cylinder, line up the ears by looking at the lock and just pop it back.

There are some cheap copy cat locks that look like Kwikset but have a different cylinder removal technique. For this you must have a key. Remove the lock and spindle like you do on a Kwikset. Insert the working key and turn to the 6 o'clock position and pull. Reinsert the same way.

Old Dexter locks must have a key to be rekeyed, unless you can pick the lock. Remove the Dexter knob, insert the operating key, and turn to the 6 o'clock position and pull.

Shimming a Lock Open When the Key is Missing

Now that you know how the lock is taken apart and reassembled, you

will now understand how to open a lock using shims.

1. Remove the lock and any clips or tailpieces. Note that some lock cylinders cannot be removed from the knob or lever without a key. This method will work, however, with Kwikset and other locks.

2. Insert a shim in the rear of the lock where the top pins meet the bottom pins.

3. Using a lock pick, reach into the front of the lock and insert the pick and lift the rear pin and allow the shim to slide forward. Once this has been done, the rear pin has been defeated. Repeat this for all of the pins. When you have finished, turn the plug away from the top pin position and use your follower to remove the plug.

Deadbolts can always be removed if a key is missing and all of them (except the Smart Key and Secure key locks) can be shimmed.

Step by Step Kwikset Breakdown and Shim



Figure 29 - Back of Kwikset Lock. Note the U-shaped stem and the round spindle laying in the "U". This spindle must be removed in order to insert the Kwikset cylinder removal tool.



Figure 30 - Note that the Kwikset cylinder removal tool has a pointed end on one side. Using this end, slip it under the "U" shaped part of the spindle cradle. You can see a small flat "catch" under the "U". Push it up to release the spindle.



Figure 31 - With the "catch" pushed up, turn the spindle halfway between fully left and fully right, and pull out completely.



Figure 32 - Spindle removed.



Figure 33 - Insert cylinder removal tool just like this. Note the two ears of the tool and their position.



Figure 34 - Slide tool in. Wiggle to make it go. When it bottoms out, wiggle, rock and push to eject cylinder. (You will get the feel for it over time!)



Figure 35 - Cylinder will pop out in your hand.

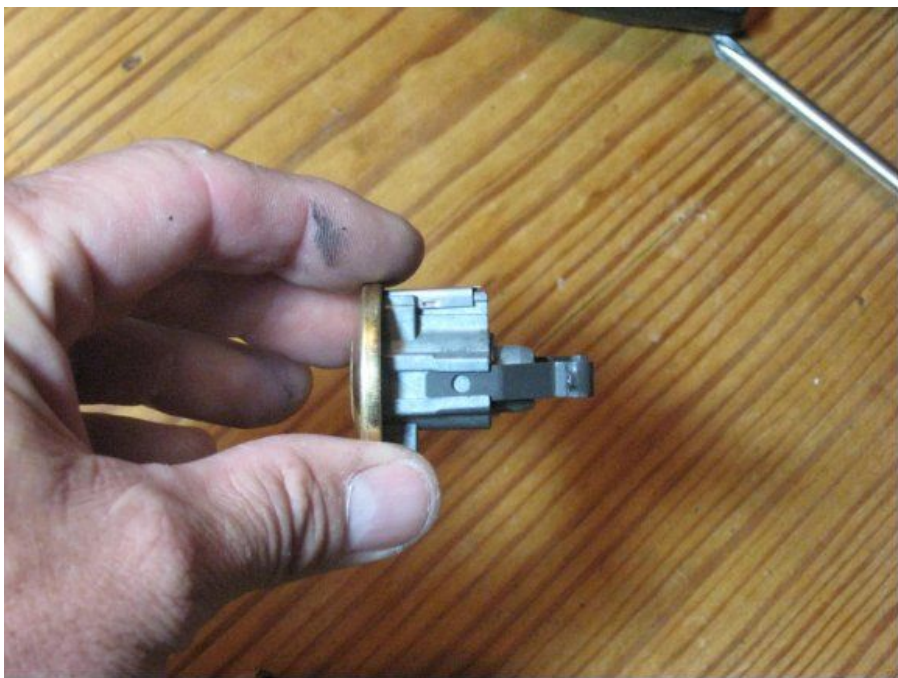


Figure 36 - Note the two ears on the cylinder. The removal tool just squeezes them together and frees the cylinder from the lock body.



Figure 37 - Remove the clip from the rear of the cylinder.

At this point, you can use your follower. Just insert the working key, turn it $\frac{1}{4}$ turn, and push the cylinder out of the lock shell and through the front of the lock.

Or, you can remove the top metal cap. You can see it just above the clip. Remove the cap, springs, and pins. Then, key up the lock to the key of your choice.



Figure 38 - Insert shim into rear of lock. Sometimes, you have find the right place to insert the shim. However, make sure it is in line with the pins! Note picture.



Figure 39 - Additional photo.



Figure 40 - Insert pick or blank key to raise all the tumblers so the shim can slide between them and create a shear line. Take your time. Some are easier to shim than others!



Figure 41 - Once the pins are shimmed, the plug will turn in the shell. Move it 1/4 turn.



Figure 42 - Insert follower into rear of lock.



Figure 43 - Push plug out of shell, maintaining even pressure on the follower.



Figure 44 - Note the uneven pins when I insert the new key. Remove these and insert the proper pins. Then, reassemble the lock.

You can get practice locks at Lowe's or Home Depot. This is one of the most common locks on the market today. Although Kwikset makes the new customer rekeyable lock, this style is still widely used. Also, do note that Callin also uses this format.

One note. There is a Kwikset copycat lock that looks exactly like the lock in the picture above. However, the cylinder is not ejected by using the Kwikset cylinder removal tool. On this particular copycat, you do remove the spindle. But, to remove the cylinder, you need an existing working key. Insert the key, turn it $\frac{1}{2}$ way around, and pull. The cylinder will release. (These are somewhat rare to see. If you encounter one, replace with a Kwikset lock.)

Need to buy tools? Check out my website for package deals!

Now, get your tools and buy some practice locks. You can order kits and tools at www.deadboltsfordollars.com. That is my site, and I try to offer tools in packages in order to save you some money. Of course, I do add a small markup on the kits.

You can email David Calvin at abestlocksmith (at) gmail (dot) com. His website is www.locksmithmurfreesboro.com and www.abestlocksmith.com. Both sites have extensive “do-it-yourself” information.

Other books by David Calvin are available on Amazon.